15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

171 592 602 613 428 seems to come *firstly* from the different residential arrangement on marriage: among the Negri Sembilan a man marries into his wife's group, i.e. his wife's village; being thus separated from his kin, and as a result of the physical absence of his wife's brother or maternal uncle in his domestic family, he enjoys considerable rights in his wife's household—as Swift states, he is 'master in his own house.' On the other hand, since among the Khasi the man stays in the village where his mother's (or mother's successor's) house is, even after his marriage, his relation to his natal house is preserved; *secondly*, from the structural difference of organization of the descent group. Among the Khasi, the *iing* is always the centre of the descent group, based on unigeniture succession and inheritance. Hence, the core of the descent group is always found physically in a particular household, whereas among the Negri Sembilan, the descent group is *not* organized on a *household* level, but in a much wider organization, including apparently many households. Membership of an actual household and of a descent group are at different levels. To marry out and become a member of his wife's household means for the man the transfer of his household membership. Likewise, his sister's husband becomes a member of his sister's household. Thereby he becomes a secondary member of his sister's household after marriage though he keeps his memberhsip in the descent group to which his sister belongs. Among the Khasi, membership of a descent group always corresponds to membership of a particular household. The Khasi man can always demand his rights at his natal house primarily, as he is a member of that descent group. But it should be noted that he has this right only in his mother's (or mother's successor's) household, not his other sisters' (non-heiress') and mother's sisters' households (unless one of them is successor of his mother), though they may belong to the same descent group. These matri kin's households are considered as separate *iing* (strict functional descent group) from his.

586 613 • 796 428 Indeed, sometimes a man cannot find his *iing*, because his mother died leaving no daughter to succeed her, or his sister died leaving no successor, and his *iing* became extinct. Such a case occasionally happens when a man becomes a divorcé or a widower as he is getting old. Then he has to face a serious social and economic condition. In divorcing, he has to leave everything he owned, his earnings including the house which he built, and even children . . . really he has nothing left him except his body.[1] Such a wretched man collects some timber and makes a small hut for himself, though sometimes lads who sympathize with him help him to build it. Unless he finds some woman

1. A widower has an alternative solution—to remain in his late wife's household till he marries again, though his position is not comfortable there.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

whom he can marry, he has to endure this miserable lonely life, while often in the same village his former wife is living in a well-built house with her children and her matrilineal relatives as before. Households of 3, 13 and 30 of Sohkynduh in List 6, and 23, 29, 38 and 56 of Kongton in List 9 are instances of such cases. It is really a pitiful picture to see such a man, aged and poor, living all alone.

V. Marriage with the Non-heiress

Outsiders who come to the Khasi Hills are often impressed by the Khasi husband's miserable status and express surprise at the high divorce rate. This is mostly due to exaggeration based on the marriage with the heiress. However, where a man marries a non-heiress, there are many successful marriages with paternal authority. In most of these cases a man's status as a husband and as a father is stable. First of all, the domestic residential unit is an elementary family. From the onset of the marriage the husband's labour is of great importance to his family, since a non-heiress usually has no economic background, i.e., no dowry or inherited property (see p. 105). The economic circumstances allow a man to be the *de facto* head even though whatever he earns belongs, as a rule, to his wife. A man who succeeds at the beginning of his married life is respected and honoured as father in his family for the rest of his life. By this type of marriage, the man's status is firmly established. It is therefore a more secure form of marriage than a match with an heiress.

In such a marriage the children love and obey their father. The management of his acquired property will be taken over by his son and the property will be handed over to his daughter. Thus the paternal authority is as well established in this form of domestic family, as in a patrilineal family. However, the great difference from a patrilineal case is that the husband/father status is not permanent as the authority of the family. Theoretically he exercises it in the absence of a male adult member of his wife's *iing* (actually founded by his contribution), in other words, till his son is grown up (see p. 12). In the next generation this will form an established *iing* in which the husband of his youngest daughter will suffer again.

The household of this kind of marriage with a non-heiress actually enjoys a considerable degree of independence from the descent groups of both wife and husband. If a man who has established a matrimonial life independent of his wife's natal *iing*, is not the authority of his natal *iing*, his relation with the latter usually becomes weaker. Economic and residential factors make it possible for the men to make the considerable shift from his *iing* to his wife's *iing*, and though

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

182 Even
586 after divorce or husband's death, the Khasi woman stays on in her
613 household. Indeed many divorced or widowed poor wives, whose
children are still small, try their best to live and bring up their children
by themselves without asking their brothers' help. Of course a
• 736 mother and her small children may go back to live in her natal
iing. Such cases are found particularly when the woman's *iing* is
rich. However, during my field work, I found no sense of psychological inferiority in Khasi women, widows or divorcées, such as we usually find in other societies. The personality of the individual seems to reflect the social structure.

182 Given such strong residential independence on the part of the
184 non-heiress, economically divorced from her descent group, and
oriented towards sociological separation from it, the husband's eco-
586 nomic and social contribution is handsomely rewarded by the estab-
597 lishment of a stable, happier, matrimonial life. In fact, as already
613 mentioned, the divorce rate among such couples is very low contrasted with the high rate among marriages with heiresses. More accurately, I should say that divorce is more likely to occur among the latter owing to the conflict of loyalties towards spouse and *iing*. Therefore, when each partner has less loyalty towards his or her natal *iing*, the divorce cases become correspondingly fewer. Thus, among the Khasi, successful marriages are frequently found where there is branching off from an *iing*. And a new *iing* is always established by a husband's contribution.

182 Khasi men, who are well aware of this fact, prefer to marry a
184 non-heiress, since they will then form an independent household and
remain immune to pressure from their wife's kin. However, they
581 say a poor or lazy man prefers marriage with an heiress. As Richards said of the matrilineal Central Bantus, the residence on marriage seems to be a most important index of the husband's status, though the determining factors of the residence of the Khasi differ from those of the Bantus (see p. 124).

182 In the case of marriage with an heiress, when the wife dies, the
184 husband usually returns to his *iing* (the youngest sister's house). But
in marriage with a non-heiress the husband often remains with his
587 children, if his children are not too small and he is not planning to
597 marry any woman other than his late wife's younger sister. If he
613 marries his wife's younger sister, he has the right to stay on. This
736 kind of sororal marriage cannot take place in the case of a man married to an heiress, since a Khasi man is not allowed to marry the late wife's elder sister. This form of sororate is found among the Khasi, but the levirate is unknown, such as can be seen among the Ashanti
182 and the Ila, where a man takes his late brother's wife. Among
587 the Khasi, even if a widow happened to marry her late husband's